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ABSTRACT

Four rural communities in northern Maine were the setting for a pilot program in Indian adult education that featured a new kind of instructional model. Developed by the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), it featured peer instruction, strict performance orientation, and insistance on mastery of certain skills. A HumRRO representative helped initiate the program by spending a month in the area training personnel and his interim report described the program as well received and off to a good start. However, in three months time, the situation changed. None of the community coordinators trained in the techniques of the model remained in their positions. After the HumRRO representative left, little was done to disseminate the availability of the program to members of the community. Recruiting was difficult; when it actually came down to getting involved in learning, the people seemed uninterested. The state official responsible for administration of the program had numerous other responsibilities and could not direct much time to the effort. The failure of the model to catch hold does not lie in the model itself; everyone who worked with it advocated its use and potential power. However, better wages for community coordinators, more administrative and supervisory support for a longer period of time, and demonstrable evidence for community interest in adult education/training would help such a program achieve more success.
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IMPLEMENTING AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY
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INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years a group of research scientists at the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) has been developing an institutional instructional model featuring peer instruction, a strict performance orientation and an insistence on mastery. The model has had demonstrable success in a number of institutional settings providing not only performance mastery but enhanced motivation as well. The question arose as to whether the model could be used in and by neighborhood communities to disseminate skills and information at low-cost and with efficiency. An opportunity to answer this question arose when the Indian Adult Education Office of the State of Maine's Education Department sought assistance in setting up a program for four rural communities in Northern Maine.

At the request of the Division of Adult Education, U. S. Office of Education, an interim report¹ was submitted in July 1972. Since the submission of the interim report a "follow-up" visit to the Maine communities during the period 27 September 1972 - 2 October 1972 took place and this report describes the current situation of the project at the point of HumRRO completion and presents observations and recommendations based upon an assessment during the "follow-up".

1. Implementing An Indigenous Community Education Program: An Interim Report. Human Resources Research Organization, July 1972.

Background

Three months ago Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) in cooperation with a group of Indian communities in Maine, with the Maine State Department of Education and with the Division of Education, U. S. Office of Education, initiated an Indigenous Community Education program on a pilot-exploratory basis. It was agreed at the time that a follow-up would occur after a three month period, its purpose being to see how the communities were reacting to the model. At that time the two community representatives on Indian Island were deeply engaged in the development of modules and in trying to establish training schedules. The representative at Pleasant Point was busily working with a Vista volunteer and a Housing & Urban Development (HUD) coordinator in developing home maintenance modules. The representative at Peter Dana Point and Aroostook County was in the process of developing some home sewing modules. All these people had been under the tutelage of a HumRRO staff member who spent full time living and working for a month in these communities. The situation as it exists three months later and the factors related to the existing situation are the topics of the follow-up and final report.

The Current Situation

Neither of the two community representatives on Indian Island are involved with the project. One moved away and the other has accepted a job with a Federal job training program. The full time community representative at Pleasant Point is no longer employed. She left for personal

reasons. None of these positions have been filled by anyone else. The woman selected to work in Aroostook County had failed to report in and has been dropped from the program without having actually been seen. Predictably, since none of the people actually trained in the techniques of the model have remained, virtually no movement has occurred in the past three months. Eight men enrolled in Operation Mainstream on Indian Island worked on the four modules and reported enjoying learning that way, once they became familiar with the procedure. No other individuals have actually been trained in the system. The state coordinator for Indian Education has requested that HumRRO return to train a new individual in the hope that this person will be able to develop the program since no one else is currently available. An informal questioning around the communities suggests that little in the way of disseminating the availability of the program to members of the community occurred once the HumRRO representative departed.

Observations

1. Everyone we spoke to who had some working acquaintance with the model advocated its use and potential power. Accordingly, we do not believe that the failure of the model to catch hold so far is due to any inherent flaw in the model itself. That is, the process of peer-instruction, the requirement of mastery criteria and the breaking of learning into discreet modules are not in and of themselves responsible for the lack of progress so far.
2. Recruiting people is definitely a problem. There is nothing in the model itself which supplies a pre-entry motive or desire to learn something.

If the people in the community see little reason to acquire a given skill, little can be done to make the learning of that skill more efficient, rapid or enjoyable. Unless there are strongly felt needs in the Adult Community to learn or unless such a need can be generated by some mechanism not inherent in the model itself, it is not fair to judge the model's actual or potential usefulness. That is not to say that the model does not possess a number of positive motivational characteristics, nor does it say that the model cannot be easily adapted to generated incentive mechanisms but it was not designed to directly generate interest. In our follow-up interviews we found that when it actually came down to getting involved in learning, few people in the community seemed interested. It may well be that many people might sign up for a traditionally organized course since in that circumstance their role would be strictly passive, but it is equally clear that such courses have not been able to keep students and have failed in these communities as a vehicle for adult education.

3. A number of informants suggested that the training of local people to disseminate the model and to organize instruction within the community should not include the design and construction of the instructional modules themselves. It was felt that this rather technical skill might be better left to professionals at least until that time when the model is solidly installed and operating. The additional pressure of having to learn and perform this skill as well as having to organize the community was felt by many to have been too heavy a burden. Furthermore,

if relieved of that burden, the coordinator could then devote full energy to community mobilizing and organizing for training. When the community indicated a need for, or interest in a particular area of training, it would be far more efficient to have the module engineering done by available consultants or technicians. This suggestion seems most sensible to us and we would recommend this arrangement in subsequent developmental efforts.

4. Once the HumRRO staff person left, the community coordinators had no one to turn to for advice and support. The individual at the State level responsible for the administration of the tryout of the model also has numerous other statewide responsibilities and could not devote an appreciable amount of time supervising and supporting this one, relatively small, effort. Accordingly, the recently trained community coordinators, new to the job, new to roles of responsibility and administration and not yet confident with the model and their role in it, had no where to turn for guidance and assurance, and as a result were unable to sustain the program. It is imperative that newly trained indigenous administrators be provided with ever available and consistent support probably for at least six months.

5. In our interim report we had recommended that people hired as community coordinators be paid a salary adequate to provide full time employment and to serve as an indication of the seriousness of intent of the agencies supporting the program. We do not know how much the coordinators were actually paid, but we are fairly certain it was not of the magnitude to reflect the demands stated above. It is quite likely

that a regularly certificated school teacher teaching an evening course or two would be paid proportionately appreciably more for his services even though he would not provide the community with an indigencous capability, nor would he be able to do anything more than teach his speciality. A well-trained and paid coordinator, on the other hand, could acquire a generalized skill which; a) would remain in the community; b) be usable for a wide variety of educational/training needs; and c) could have a stronger impact on the community's sense of self-development.

Recommendations

Although demonstrable change or progress has not occurred, it is believed that the overall model has excellent potential for training in communities as experienced in the Maine project. However, in order to install and expand this program to achieve satisfactory results, the following need to be considered:

1. A community must provide demonstrable evidence that a need for adult training/education would be translated into actual behavior if an appropriate opportunity to meet this need occurs.
2. Administrative and supervisory support must be wholehearted and constant for at least six months.
3. Individuals selected to work as community coordinators must be paid a full-time, attractive wage and they must be people who, in addition to their willingness and aptitude for the role, must give evidence of a high liklihood of remaining on the job for at least a year after training is completed.

4. Financial support for such efforts must reflect a genuine and serious belief in the necessity and importance of such efforts to provide communities with skills and models by which they can eventually change themselves in directions of their own choosing.
5. Arrangements consistent with the comments above should be made so that the system can be thoroughly tested.